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PEACE AND
OTHER POEMS

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POEMS.

[*Out of Print.*]

LYRICS.

LORD VYET AND OTHER POEMS.

THE PROFESSOR AND OTHER
POEMS.

PEACE AND OTHER POEMS

BY

ARTHUR CHRISTOPHER BENSON

Fellow of Magdalene College, Cambridge.

*Thou shalt make me to understand
wisdom secretly.*

JOHN LANE, THE BODLEY HEAD
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TO
OUR DEAREST BETH
QVIA MVLTUM AMAVIT

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PEACE AND
OTHER POEMS

NOTE.

Certain of the poems here collected have appeared in different periodicals, *The Spectator*, *The National Review*, *Macmillan's Magazine*, *The Thrush*, and *The Sheaf*. Two of them, the *Ode to Music* and the *Coronation Ode*, have been published, with music, by Messrs. Novello & Co. and Messrs. Boosey & Co. respectively. I take this opportunity of thanking the Editors and Proprietors concerned for the kind permission granted me to reprint the poems in question.

A. C. B.

Magdalene College, Cambridge,

March 30th, 1905.

4.
5.
PRÆLUDÆ

*Once again the faltering string
Trembles to my eager hand ;
I would speak the gracious thing
That I grow to understand.*

*Once again the dreary voice
Murmurs in my saddened ear :—
“ If thou wilt, poor soul, rejoice ;
Sing ; but there are few to hear.”*

*Nay be braver, faithless heart !
Silence, O thou hollow voice !
I must play my simple part,
'Tis enough that I rejoice.*



PEACE

ALONG the lonely valley's grassy floor

I wandered long ; the seaward breeze blew cool
Over the grey stones and the windswept moor ;
And foaming down from pool to emerald pool
The clear stream leapt ; on either side the high
Grey bastions steadfast hung ; how still the
vale !

No sound save rustling grasses, or the cry

Of sheep on bare hill-edges, or the wail

Of gulls aloft, on vague and aimless quest that sail.

PEACE

Yet here at length is peace, or seeming peace ;—
Elsewhere the world may change, but ah,
not here !

Far to the South the shameless towns increase,
Their smoke-stained fronts the rumbling
factories rear,

Yet here, it seems, a thousand years ago,
The dreaming mind no difference might descry ;
Even so the hills were silent ; even so
The crisp grass clung—the wistful wind
crept by,

The dimpled pool lay smiling at the stainless sky.

Higher I mount, thridding the trackless hill,
O'er tumbled cataracts of shapeless stones,
Till now the streams are silent, where the chill

PEACE

And shivering mountain shows his haggard
bones.

I gain the peak ; and lo, the fertile land
Lies like a chart ; the river wanders wide
In shining loops ; on yellow leagues of sand
Soft creeps the white-rimmed sea—and, far
descried,

The shadowy hills of hope beyond the golden tide !

From hamlet roofs, embowered deep in wood,
The blue smoke rising hangs ; the burdened
heart

Saith softly to itself, “ ’twere surely good
Within yon quiet land to dwell apart ! ”
Yet there poor hearts are restless, even there
They pine for love, they scheme for simple gain,
And some are sunk in heavy-eyed despair,

PEACE

And weary life of lasting rest is fain,
And fevered sufferers count the sad slow hours of pain.

“ Nay, nay, not thus,” the ardent mind replies,
“ Long is delight and short the hour of woe ;
Warm hearths are glad with children’s happy cries,
And lovers linger when the light is low.”
Ah me, I know it—but the brightness done,
The failing life its darkening harbour nears,—
A heap of mouldering turf, a carven stone,
A lonely grief that fades, through faithful
tears,
Fades to a gentle tale among the shadowy years.

I am not weary of the kindly earth,
Nay, I am fain of honour and delight ;

PEACE

I bless the patient hour that gave me birth,
I shudder at the nearer-creeping night ;
But I have dreams of something deeper yet,
A steadfast joy that daily should increase,
Warm glowing 'neath the ashes of regret ;
Not dull content that comes when ardours cease,
But peace divinely bright, unconquerable peace.

Each morn I would arise with tranquil heart,
Not boding ill unknown, and simply take
The burden of the day, and play my part
As not for self, but for some loved one's sake ;
For love makes light of trouble, if it gain
The smile of the Beloved, if it know
That One is spared the lightest touch of pain ;
For this is life's best guerdon, to forego
Light pleasure, if it serve the Best-belovéd so.

PEACE

Life is not life, if in inglorious sloth
The dull days pass, the years unheeded roll ;
The grievous message comes, the friend is wroth,
And little slights must sting the aching soul ;
Tho' I be bent on service, even then
Rich gratitude for heedless favours given,
Impatient deeds, that win from patient men
Much thanks, upbraid me, who so ill have
striven,
Yet give me gracious glimpses of the mind of Heaven.

Not here nor there is peace to be achieved,
The mind must change, and not the earthly
scene ;
And how shall he who once hath truly grieved
Gain hope and strength to be secure, serene ?

PEACE

Not by forgetting shall such rest be earned,
Nor with closed eyes that dare not see the light,
But facing loss and death, and having learned
What hope remains, what heritage of might—
Then on the fearful heart dawns the unhoped-for light.

And not in youth can this be only seen,
Not till the years have dimmed the dinted
shield ;
Not till the stern thought of what might have
been
Hath pierced the spirit, and the wound is healed.
Youth dreams of love and conquest, generous
dreams,
Nought is too high but he shall dare to climb ;
Then, when in mid ascent the summit seems

PEACE

More steep than Heaven itself, more old than
Time,

Then dawns the light, and makes the broken life sublime.

Then falls the stress of battle, which shall prove
What spirit best inspired the ardent dream ;
And only he that based his hope in love
Shall reach the height where dawns the fitful
gleam ;

For one is marred in sickness, one in health,
And one is fettered with a chain of care,
And one is spent in piling useless wealth,
And one in petty triumphs, thin as air,
And few set foot upon the upward-climbing stair.

But he that hath not bound his clouded mind
With care, or foolish hope, or vile desire,

PEACE

He shall be strong, and resolute to find
True gold in ashes of the sinking fire ;
He, if the world shall call him, simply great,
Shall do high deeds, and care not for the
praise ;
Or be high place denied, not less elate,
In some green corner shall live out his days,
And lavish all his best in simple seemly ways.

Then, when the sands of life fall rare and light,
Then when the spent keel grates upon the
sand,
No matter whether victor in the fight
Or vanquished, so the fight was greatly planned !
His soul shall be all lit with golden gleams,
As when, between the darkness and the day,
The sinking sun, with thrice-ennobling beams,

PEACE

Gilds with unearthly grace and richer ray
Familiar fields and trees, covert and winding way.

Peace, Peace, what art thou ? Is it truth they
hold

Who deem that in the world thou art not found ?
I know indeed thou art not bought or sold,

But I have seen thee, robed in sight and sound ;
An hour ago, where yonder glimmering pool

Gleams in the brown moor like a silver isle,
I sate to hear the water lapping cool ;

She came, my dreaming spirit to beguile,
Finger on lip, and downcast eyes that seemed to smile.

Nay, she is near us yet—'tis only we
Have lost the skill to hear her shyly pass,

PEACE

When she with swift and viewless mystery
Fleets like the breeze across the bending grass ;
Not in the gaps of profitable toil,
Not in weak intervals of feverish haste
May she be wooed ; but when from stain and soil
Our hands are free, and weakness proudly faced,
Then may the gracious form be sisterly embraced.

Ah—unsubstantial prize, ah, faint reward !
Is then the cold gift of thy temperate hand
No carnal triumph of the empurpled sword,
No fiery thought that fills the awestruck land ?
But quiet hours, and sober silent truth,
That not in envy, not in acrid scorn,
Can set aside the elvish dreams of youth,
The haggard fears of age and languor born,
Patient with both, and if alone yet not forlorn ?

PEACE

While thus I mused, the day as though in pain
Turned pale and shivered ; soon the west
was cold.

The glancing stonechat piped his thin refrain,
And made the hills more silent, grey, and old.
Swiftly I went, and leaping downwards gained
The green trim valley, leaving sad and stern
The huge rock ramparts, scarred and torrent-
stained,
And bursting swiftly through the crackling fern,
Saw through the tree-stems black the orange sunset burn.

THE CHARCOAL-BURNER

DEEP in the forest's secret heart,
Within green glooms and half-lit shade,
The charcoal-burner plies his art,
And moves about the silent glade.

Around tall stakes, that inward lean,
Small leafy boughs he twists and binds,
And turf breast-high, to guard and screen
His stiffening limbs from aching winds.

Beside the broad and knotted oak,
Still leafless, when the Spring is done,
All day the pungent oily smoke
Wells upward from his plastered cone.

THE CHARCOAL-BURNER

All night, beneath the star-strewn sky,
That roofs the glimmering wood below,
Through dusty films a fiery eye
Gleams with a still and inward glow.

At noon, above his labour bowed,
He hears beyond the branch-built stack
The cart that jolts and jangles loud
Along the upward-climbing track.

The sodden cartridge stained with rust,
By merry sportsman flung behind ;
He lifts it musing from the dust,
It seems to link him to his kind.

In mists of sound a Sabbath chime
Across the dreaming woodland swims,
He dreams of some forgotten time,
And murmurs half-remembered hymns.

THE CHARCOAL-BURNER

He sees the snake, a liquid coil,
Take shape, and rustle through the leaves,
The robin that, to spy his toil,
Hops bickering round his branching eaves.

He heeds not, tho' the nightingale
Sings richly to a dying fall,
Though answering cuckoos up the vale
Draw closer, every time they call.

He cares not though the windflower wave
Her gleaming stars beneath the night,
Not though the glossy bluebell pave
The copse with tracts of purple light.

When morning glimmers in the glade
He wakes, his punctual slumbers done,
And ere the dusky twilight fade
He sleeps, as dreamless as a stone.

THE CHARCOAL-BURNER

He hears the first shy songster spill
His liquid note, nor loud nor long,
Faint tremulous pipe and drowsy trill,
Till all the wood is rich with song.

He listens when the night-winds rise
About his turf-piled parapet,
And when the last soft murmur dies
He dreams of something stiller yet.

And if the rattling thunder break
From ragged cloud-wreaths, piled in air,
He hides himself within the brake,
And all his mind is dim with prayer.

He is not merry, is not sad ;
Unthinking, hour by lonely hour,
Is in the sunshine dumbly glad,
And dumbly patient in the shower.

THE CHARCOAL-BURNER

He hath no fierce desires to slake,
 No restless impulse to control,
And moving woods and waters make
 A secret music in his soul.

He hath no altar and no priest,
 But in the forest, vast and dim,
Tall branches keep a solemn feast,
 And thrushes chant a vesper hymn.

The broad face of the tranquil sky
 Is mirrored in the forest pool,
And somewhat fatherly and high
 .: Walks in the forest in the cool.

God is about him all day long ;
 He hears around each haunted path
An endless litany of song ;
 For shrine and incense-smoke he hath

THE CHARCOAL-BURNER

His branching roof of subtle grace,
Fresh savours on the wholesome air ;
A forest is a holy place,
And labour is the seed of prayer.

ICARUS

SHEER fall the white cliff ramparts, ledge by ledge ;
The withered creeper trails its silken hair,
The fearless saplings, rooted at the edge,
Lean o'er the dizzy stair.

Cold in the East He wakens ; He is drest
In clouds and gathering shadow. He is there
Behind yon amber sunset in the West,
And here, and everywhere.

Hence must I leap, although my faltering heart
Reluctant thrills, by craven fears beguiled ;
Lord of the gracious heaven, whate'er Thou art,
Uphold Thy eager child !

ICARUS

I must go forth to meet Him, though He hide
His secret face, and veil His inmost mind;
I know Him great and infinitely wise;—
I think His heart is kind.

The dear world calls me, saying, “Go not yet;”
“A little while in these warm fields delay!”
My face even now with parting tears is wet,
And still I dare not stay.

Soon, soon I may be lying, racked and torn,
On yon sharp ledge, to hang and moulder there;
Or I may learn His secret, strongly borne
Through viewless wastes of air !

THE SHADOW OF DEATH

AND I, who feel so much alive,
Who thrill with life from head to feet,
Work, think, and speak, enjoy and thrive,
Love daylight, talk, and cheerful meat ;—
The day must come when from my door
‘I must be borne with waxen face,
A stiffened thing, all shrouded o’er,
To my last dark abiding-place.

There have been days when I desired
To fling the wearied flesh away,
So sad I seemed, so inly tired,
I loathed the bright, unfeeling day.

THE SHADOW OF DEATH

And yet in spite of pain and loss,
The world is daily grown more dear ;
I love my life, nor hold it dross,
I love it—I would still be here !

Each day that passes binds me close
And closer to the world I love ;
Each day that wanes, the instinct grows
To look around, and not above ;
Bright boys and girls, all ardent hearts,
Sweet women, wise and warlike men,
I watch them play their gracious parts ;—
I wonder shall I watch them then ?

God, Thou didst make me, set me here ;
I own with tears Thy sovereign power ;—
I would not shrink in shuddering fear !
Oh, in that last and dreadful hour,

THE SHADOW OF DEATH

Give some strong medicine for my soul,
Ere my sick spirit find release ;
And when the dim tides o'er me roll,
Enwrap the darkening mind with peace.

TO HAVE SEEN

If a man might see,
In one flash of light,
The eternal end
Of his dearest hope ;
How his horoscope
Shall together blend
Beauty, Truth and Right ;
All that he shall be ;

Would he, having seen,
Walk in joy and peace,
Patient, calm and kind,
Blithe and undismayed ?

TO HAVE SEEN

Would he bend to aid
Every faltering mind,
Giving sure release,
Making whole and clean ?

Nay ; but deep amaze
Would his spirit hold ;
With a burden great
He would stumbling go.
Best for man the slow
Conquest, and the late
Triumph; and the old,
Sorrowful delays.

IN THAT DAY

Absalom, Absalom !
Put back thy fragrant hair !
Loud is the city's hum ;
Why dost thou linger there.
To set soft hearts on fire ?
That thou may'st reign, and be
What vainly men desire,
What best it liketh thee ?
Hark to the city's hum,
Absalom, Absalom !

Absalom, Absalom !
Canst thou not clearer see

IN THAT DAY

The thronging forms that come
Beneath the branching tree ?

The green ways of the wood,
And dripping from the dart
The small dull pool of blood
That drains the traitorous heart.

See the dim forms that come,
Absalom, Absalom !

IN THE MIST

'TWAS hid in mist to-day,

The land I love.

Thin veils of vapour lay

Around, above.

Tired head and weary hand,—

Onward I fare

I can but guess the land

I love lies there !

THE BIRD

“ BIRD in the branching tree,
Clasping the airy bough,
What is thy minstrelsy ?
What singest thou ? ”

“ Hark ! ” said the bird, “ I sing
The sunshine and the rain,
And many a sweet small thing
That cometh not again.”

“ Swift from the tree’s green heart
Joyfully leaps the song !
Rare is thy secret art
So rich and strong ! ”

THE BIRD

“ Nay,” said the bird, “ not so !
I have no skill, no art ;
Only the thanks that flow
From a full glad heart.”

“ Over the still pale streams
Quivers a single star !
Is it thy hope that gleams
So fair, so far ? ”
“ Nay,” said the bird, “ I sing
Neither of joy nor pain ;
Sweet, most sweet is the thing
That cometh not again.”

THE SOUL OF A CAT

WHEN nights are warm, and roofs are dry,
And gaily sails the sickle moon,
And noiseless bats rush flickering by,
And drowsy streamlets softly croon ;

; My fury cat, who listless lies
Between the shadow and the light,
Sits up, and rubs his drowsy eyes,
And thinks how loud he'll sing to-night !

When lamps are lit within the house,
And punctual crickets chide and call,
When now the hungry jumping mouse
Begins to scramble in the wall ;

THE SOUL OF A CAT

My cat looks round and rises slow,
Stern purpose in his solemn eye ;
Leaps from the window ; saunters slow
Around the dark-leav'd barberry.

In vain his warm and firelit room
Awaits to tempt him if he pass ;
He fades upon the shadowy gloom,
He melts into the dusky grass ;

And soon across the twilight dim,
A sound of music comes and goes ;
He chants an amorous rising hymn,
Or screams defiance at his foes.

THE PARROT

My Parrot, an obtrusive bird,
Who whistles shrill, and briskly swears,
Sits all day long, with muttered word,
In his snug cage, beside the stairs.

But this bright morning, when the breeze
Soft in the garden-corners cried,
Poor Poll, with rising envy, sees
The great, green, glittering world outside.

The cage was open ! 'twould be sweet
To win ancestral liberty !
He crossed the lawn with crafty feet,
And fluttered to a sheltering tree.

THE PARROT

All day, with soft seductive art,
“Poor Poll!” and “Pretty Dear!” we cried;
And only from the tree’s dark heart,
A demon’s mocking laugh replied.

But when the grim and haunted night
Fell darkly, veiled with chilly showers,
Poor Poll, with hurried awkward flight,
Relinquished his aerial bowers.

Oh then, as some sea-battered craft
Wins gladly to the welcome shore,
Poll smoothed his ruffled plumes, and laugh’d,
And vow’d he would not wander more.

THE GUERDON

TWENTY long years ago,
And it seems like yesterday !
And what have I got to show,
What have I gained by the way ?

I have loved my fellow men,
But have loved yet more my will ;
I was heedless and faithless then,
. I am faithless and heedless still.

Thirsting for love and joy,
Eager to mould and plan,
These were the dreams of a boy,
These are the dreams of a man.

THE GUERDON

Cloister, and court, and grove,
And soft lawns down by the stream,
What is your word of love ?
What are the dreams you dream ?

East and West they are gone,
My comrades of yesterday ;
Some of them striding on,
Some of them fall'n by the way.

Yet this is my thought alone,
This have I won by the way ;—
That twenty long years have flown,
And it seems like yesterday !

THE CALL

I DID not hope that shallow fame
Should crown your quiet worth,
The idle glitter of a name
That wins the sons of earth ;
But year by year I marked you grow
More tranquil, strong, and kind ;
I deemed you apt to serve below ;—
∴ Ah me, but I was blind !

I questioned why you strayed so far
By sunny Southern streams,
What dim and visionary star
Still led your silent dreams ;

THE CALL

You gazed upon the pictured Child,
The Mother's radiant brow,
And if I wondered why you smiled
I do not wonder now.

I muse upon the frail desires
Wherin my spirit slips,
It may be that the heavenly fires
Shall cleanse these soiled lips !
You had no need to be forgiven,
No stain was on your brow ;
Ah, you were ready for His Heaven,
And so He claims you now.

A SONG OF SWEET THINGS THAT
HAVE AN END

THE dark wood and the solemn sky,
The moon's face on the glimmering pool,
The full stream singing drowsily,
The faint breeze out of the thicket cool.

Heart speaketh to heart,
Friend is glad with friend ;
The golden hours depart,
Sweet things have an end.

The white cloud on the green down's edge,
The clear stream by the gravel small,

A SONG OF SWEET THINGS

Pale honey-horns that swing in the hedge,
The cock's halloo and the dove's low call.

Heart speaketh to heart,
Friend is glad with friend ;
The golden hours depart,
Sweet things have an end.

Hidden music airily heard,
The child's voice in the warm woodways,
The soft glance and the murmured word,
The soft close of the summer days.

Heart speaketh to heart,
Friend is glad with friend ;
The golden hours depart,
Sweet things have an end.

THE FOOL

FIGHT, said the Knight,

Fight well!

Let the sword be bright,

Flashing left and right;

Life or death, day or night,

Heaven or Hell,—

No matter, so I fight,

∴ Fight well.

Sing, said the Bard,

Sing well!

Though the way be hard,

Though the joy be marred;

THE FOOL

At the clanging of the blows,
At the whisper of a rose,
Thou shalt tell
What each knows not and yet knows ;
Sing well !

Mark, said the Fool,
Mark well !
The minstrels will I rule,
And will set the knights to school.
Though I cannot sing nor fight,
I can judge if swords be bright ;
I can tell
If the minstrel rhymeth right,
Mark ye well !

The knight ran to fight
With a will ;

THE FOOL

His eye was glad and bright ;
His sword flashed left and right.
In the evening on his face
He was lying in his place
Very still.

Said the Fool, “ They that fight
Have their fill.”

The minstrel rose to sing,
'Twas a strain
That he loved, a gracious thing ;
And the harpers in a ring
Twanged a prelude clear and strong ;
Oh, to please the listening throng
They were fain ;
But the heart too full of song
Brake in twain.

THE FOOL

Said the Fool, “They have spent
That they had.

The Minstrel’s heart is rent,
And the Knight’s good sword is bent;
What remaineth, for my part,
But to keep the cheerful heart
That I had ?”

So the Fool made merriment,
And was glad.

THE CHANGE

FROM my tall house, above the stream,

As daylight fades by slow degrees,
I watch the dying sunset gleam
Thro' line on line of leafless trees.

How changed my life, that even now

Was full of stir and jocund noise—

The homely task, the knitted brow,

.. The talk of laughter-loving boys.

To-day I tarry with the dead,

Dig secrets out of dusty quires,

Trace rills of statecraft to their head,

And scrape the ash from smouldering fires.

THE CHANGE

And yet I grieve not, tho' I miss
The faltering word from beardless lip,
The guarded hours of leisured bliss,
The joys of gentle fellowship.

I would be tranquil ; I would learn
The secret of the quiet mind,
Not to look forward, not to yearn
For joys that I have left behind.

So in this dim and starless hour
I rest contented, glad to hear
The whisper of the rustling shower,
The soft plunge of the sleepless weir.

MAKING HASTE

“SOON !” says the Snowdrop, and smiles at the
motherly Earth,

“Soon !—for the Spring with her languors
comes stealthily on.

Snow was my cradle, and chilly winds sang at
my birth ;

Winter is over—and I must make haste to
be gone !”

“Soon,” said the Swallow, and dips to the wind-
ruffled stream,

“Grain is all garnered—the Summer is over
and done ;

MAKING HASTE

Bleak to the Eastward the icy battalions gleam,
Summer is over—and I must make haste to
be gone ! ”

“ Soon—ah, too soon ! ” says the Soul, with a
pitiful gaze,

“ Soon !—for I rose like a star, and for aye
would have shone.

See the pale shuddering dawn, that must wither
my rays,

Leaps from the mountain—and I must make
haste to be gone ! ”

THE SHADOW

THOU comest, an expected guest,
Pale Shadow, to my cloistered house ;
With gentle mien thou enterest,
With grave assent and bended brows.

Then sit awhile and talk with me,
And show me thoughts undreamed of still ;
The thing I am, yet would not be,
The sickness of the ailing will.

And yet I pray thee not to grow
Too tyrannous, too stern for peace ;
Light up some generous dreams, to glow
And gleam across the ridged seas.

THE SHADOW

Bring near the radiance of the Far,
 Speak not of death, but second birth ;
Quench not the light of flower and star,
 Strike not her glory from the Earth.

But when thy gracious work is done,
 And cleansed the willing sacrifice,
Bring incense ; deck the altar-stone,
 And let the holy fires uprise.

THE HIDDEN MANNA

A TALE of lonely grief he told,
Of shattered life and dull despair ;
And as he spoke a mist unrolled,
And angels, sorrowful and fair,
Cool leaves of healing trees did hold.

Ah me, 'twas I, not he, espied
Those proffering hands, that healing tree
Beside the bitter spring, beside
The silent wells of agony—
And I, not he, was satisfied.

AT EVENTIDE

At morn I saw the level plain
So rich and small beneath my feet,
A sapphire sea without a stain,
And fields of golden-waving wheat;
Lingering I said, "At noon I'll be
At peace by that sweet-scented tide.
How far, how fair my course shall be,
Before I come to the Eventide!"

Where is it fled, that radiant plain ?
I stumble now in miry ways;
Dark clouds drift landward, big with rain,
And lonely moors their summits raise.

AT EVENTIDE

On, on with hurrying feet I range,
And left and right in the dumb hillside,
Grey gorges open, drear and strange,
And so I come to the Eventide!

BY THE CAGE

FLY hence, sweet bird! thou art not bound;
The sun is warm, the air breathes sweet;
Thy tiny comrades hover round,
They peck and trip with restless feet.

Nay, nay, I would not have thee go,
I would have loved thee, would have schemed
To shield from every passing woe—
Thy cage no prison should have seemed.

I think thou would'st have loved it well,
I would have marked each eager mood,
And woven such a dainty spell
Thou wouldst have loved thy servitude.

BY THE CAGE

Thou could'st have cheered my lonely heart
To patience ; and with love for skill
Hadst sung me, with untutored art,
Sweet strains of forest, field, and hill.

And I, I would have striven to fill
Thy life with sweetness, richly strown
The sternest, saddest soul would thrill
To feel so sweet a life his own !

It may not be ! and my regret,
Sweet prisoner, shall be softly borne ;
The liberty thou lov'st not yet
Is too august to shun or scorn.

And thou far hence, in sterner days,
When through steep rain the white rays shine,
Among the dripping forest ways,
Shalt know a fuller life is thine.

BY THE CAGE

Amid the ferny wilderness,
Beside the sharp and hissing sea,
There wilt thou somewhat sadly bless
The lonely soul that set thee free.

One tender song ere thou depart
Sing softly, for the light is low ;
What, would'st thou chide me, loving heart ?
Nay linger not ! 'tis time to go.

Thy wings are strong, thine eye is bright,
The silent wood shall fence thee round ;
The wind will rock thy bower to-night ;
Fly hence, sweet bird ; thou art not bound.

THE LOOSESTRIFE

PURPLE are the spires of the velvet loosestrife ;
On the gliding water lies a purple stain,
Hour by hour it blushes where the brimming
 river rushes,
Rushes gaily, rushes proudly, but cometh not
 again.

On a day in deep midsummer doth the purple
loosestrife
Break in clustered blossom, on a day that poets
 know,

THE LOOSESTRIFE

Over beds of whispering rushes, where the green
dim freshet gushes,
Where through leagues of level pastureland
the stream winds slow.

Many are thy flow'ret faces, sturdy loosestrife,
Not a bloom, but a jocund company of
bloom ;
Thou dost face each wind that bloweth, and the
circling sun that gloweth
From his eastern cloud-pavilions to the western
gloom.

We depart, and men forget us soon, but, O
brave loosestrife,
Thou shalt link the laughing hour to the hour
that laughs no more.

THE LOOSESTRIFE

Thou shalt gather grace and glory and a crown
of ancient story,

And the child shall love the velvet spire his
father loved before.

Bend thy velvet head, whisper low, purple loose-
strife,

Tender secrets of the summer, and the shore,
and the stream,

Of the bright eyes that espied thee, and the soft
hopes breathed beside thee,

Summer vows and sunny laughter and the
golden dream.

Many are the hearts that have loved thee, loose-
strife,

Very true and tender was the heart that loved
thee best.

THE LOOSESTRIFE

He was wounded many a morrow ; he was
pierced with utter sorrow,
He was blind and hungry-hearted, and he
could not rest.

Wherfore, when thou swayest in the breezes,
loosestrife,
Shine for other wanderers and repair thy
lustrous head ;
But bethink thee of thy lover, whom the grave-
yard grasses cover,
And the stain upon the waters, where a heart
hath bled.

BY THE WEIR

SLOW stirs the boat; beneath the cool
Clear water sways the ribboned weed;
The large-eyed fish across the pool
Poise, dart and poise, and give no heed.
The distant woods are dim with haze,
The merry swallows flicker near;
And o'er the flashing waterways
.: Murmurs and drips the lazy weir.

The reed beside me stirs and shakes
His tufted head, how fresh and strong!
And in my drowsy memory wakes
An old and half-forgotten song.

BY THE WEIR

And all the books I mean to write,
And all the fame that I would win,
And all uneasy dreams take flight,
And leave my heart at peace within.

Ah me! but we forget to live!
We sell sweet days for wealth and pride;
And when we have no more to give,
The soul is still unsatisfied!
Well, I have laboured, I have planned;
For once my plans, my labours cease.
God lays to-day a loving hand
Upon my shoulder, saying " Peace ! "

THE AUREOLE

Lo, as it fleets across the grass,
My shadow, while the morn declines,
Around my dark head, as I pass,
A tender aureole moves and shines.

My aureole, twined of fire and dew,
Frail crown of solitary hope,
Thou dost with secret gleam endue
The darkness of my horoscope.

No eye but mine may see the sight ;
My shadow seeks the lowly ground,
And yet it goes, arrayed in light,
And with eternal radiance crowned.

THE PINEWOOD

I RODE along the wind-swept heath,
Far off the shadowy downland stood ;
The billowy land was spread beneath,
With league on league of field and wood.

My empty heart was fed that day ;
I entered, where the road declines,
A wood that in the sunshine lay,
A warm keen-scented wood of pines.

A tender incense toward me streamed ;
'Twas warm with hope, 'twas sweet with tears ;
'Twas rich with all the joys I dreamed
Long since, in old enchanted years.

THE PINEWOOD

Swift healing did that fragrance bring ;
It filled my empty spirit up,
Swift as a little rushing spring
Fills full a thirsty traveller's cup.

Let me remember, when the day
Is weary, when my heart declines,
The wood that in the sunshine lay,
The still sweet-scented wood of pines.

SUCCORY

MANY a summer have I trode
This familiar homely road ;
Many a summer have I seen
You, your stalks of wiry green,
Wide rosettes of tenderest blue
As the very skies looked through ;
Every passing chariot leaves
Dust upon your wrinkled leaves ;
Strong you play your ceaseless part,
Tough of frame but true of heart ;
You are safe ; your fibred strands
Disenchant the tender hands,

SUCCORY

Tender hands that spoil and slay,
Pull, and smell, and cast away.

Flower of ancient ancestry,
Generations pass you by;
Man who boasts of high descent,
Sire and grandsire eminent,
Is a puny parvenu,
; Budding flower, compared with you.
Year by year you wax and rise
Underneath the glowing skies,
Year by year your life is bound
; Sinking languid under-ground;
Who that marks you cannot see
How you love to bloom and be ?
And your thoughtless summer bliss,
Herb of glory, tells me this.

SUCCORY

*'Twas a Loving Heart that bade you
Catch your hue from skies above you;
And the Heart unwearied, free,
Ancient, wise, that bade you be,
Did not wish you ill, who made you;
Wished me well, who look and love you.*

THE LIZARD

JEWELLED Lizard, you and I
On the heathery hill-top lie,
While the westering sun inclines
Past the clump of red-stemmed pines ;
O'er the little space of sun
Creep their shadows, one by one.

Now you sit with sparkling eye
While the bee spins homing by ;
Now you quiver, dart, and rush,
Flickering thro' the heather-bush ;
Pattering round me, as I muse,
Through the dry gorse avenues.

THE LIZARD

What fantastic spirit made you
So devized you, so arrayed you,
Thus, through centuries of leisure,
Shaped you for a moment's pleasure,
Stole from woodland diadems
Your incomparable gems,
Borrowed from the orbèd dew
Emerald glints to burnish you ?

See, the world beneath us smiles ;
Heathery uplands, miles on miles,
Purple plains and ridges steep,
Smoke from hamlets bowered deep,
Rolling downs with hazy head
To the far horizon spread.

Think it, lizard, every rood,
Every stretch of field and wood,

THE LIZARD

Every yard of sunny space,
Rears and tends its little race !
Half-a-hundred little hearts
Play unseen their tiny parts,
Bask beneath the liquid sky,
Lizard bright, as you and I.

Whence and whither ? here you rest ;
You would scorn the foolish quest.
I in drear omniscience
Weave me dreams of how and whence.
You, you care not ; you, you run
To and fro beneath the sun,
Till these lights your armour leave,
Darkling in the dusky eve.

BURNHAM BEECHES

PLEASANT glades of Burnham, with your beeches'
flaring glories,
With your high and heathery upland, and sweet
leafy dell,
I have often wandered thro' you, very joyful and
high-hearted,
But I come to-day in sadness, for I come to
say farewell.

Northward from the heath lies the deep enchanted
forest,
Secret, still and beautiful, in sun or shade or
shower,

BURNHAM BEECHES

You smile as though you guarded a quiet happy secret,

Leafy-roofed, high-branching, with your brown and rustling floor.

There are birds within the thickets singing proudly, singing sweetly,

There are trees that talk together, by the merry breezes fanned,

There are streams that leap to daylight out of cool and hidden channels,

They would whisper me the secret if I could
but understand.

Onward, onward, say the breezes ; to the unknown land before us,

From the golden gates of morning to the low-hung mists of eve ;

BURNHAM BEECHES

Sing birds, and ripple waters, and tall trees talk
together !

I have tasted of your gladness, and I will not
dare to grieve.

BY THE GROVE

As some strong tree that feels a burrowing worm
Bite at his heart, and hath no skill to pluck
The horror thence, but feels him drain and
; suck
The generous sap, and channel in the firm
White wholesome wood, till all the trunk be
; full
Of crumbling dusty channels, and the leaves,
High home of crooning doves on windless
eves,
Grow sere and thin, their burnished foliage dull—

BY THE GROVE

Poor tree ! he can but sicken where he stands
With dumb despairing patience ; but for me,
When from the dark the boding voices call,
Though I be pierced and shattered, yet I fall
Back on the Heart that beats for me, the Hands
That made me, and the Will that bade me be.

THE DREAM

I DREAMED that I was dead, and smiling lay
Glad as a child, that wakens in the dawn,
And sees, across the dewy glimmering lawn
The light that brings some longed-for holiday.

So this was all, I said, and death is o'er ;
The shadow that has lain across the years
Is safely passed, and I have done with fears,
And I am glad and free for evermore !

Then with small joyous laughter I addressed
My heart to peace and wonder, when a flame

THE DREAM

Of terror seized my spirit, mournful pain ;
Dull sadnesses that would not let me rest ;
And through dim labyrinths of sleep I came
Back to the cruel day, back to my chain.

THE ASH-HEAP

'TWAS in a place where things unclean are
thrown ;

Grey garbage, rusty horrors, clout and can
Amorphous, and the tattered husk of man,
Sick, fretted vegetables, blistered bone ;

There in the midst a gracious floweret blew,
With sleek strong leaves and dainty drooping
bell,
And poured each hour its pure and spicy
smell,
Amid the sour and sickening breaths it drew.

THE ASH-HEAP

And 'tis my hope that when through sullen days
I scold and chatter like a peevish pie,
With ink-stained fingers and a burdened
heart,
Some seed, divinely floated, may upraise
Its tender head, and with unconscious art
Reflect the radiance of the unruffled sky !

S. VINCENT DE PAUL

Oh, I have fought a little, but not well ;
Laboured a little, not because I would ;
Loved ease, and grasped a pleasure where I
could ;—

Of strenuous deeds I have no tale to tell.

But ugly things, reluctantly defied,
Cankers from roses picked, false fertile weeds
Off-ript, ere they could strew their noisome
seeds ;—

These are my conquests, with no room for
pride.

S. VINCENT DE PAUL

Oh spiritless heart, thou hast not earned thy rest,
 Yet thou art weary ; and the dark hours roll,
And tired things flee to some protecting breast !
 Yet will I hold my life not vainly spent
If one, but one mute, unconsidered soul
 Thro' me be richer, better, more content.

IN SCHOOL YARD

Snow underfoot ; and outlined white and soft
Statue and plinth and cornice, where the grim
Vast buttresses troop westward, towering dim,
So cold, so comfortless ; the air aloft

Yawns into blackness ; but below, the bright
Barred casements strike a glow upon the air,
And busy voices hum and murmur there
Of boys that hardly guess their heart is light.

And yet, alone and sad, I hear a voice
That chides me, yearning for that thoughtless
bliss,

IN SCHOOL YARD

Amid dark walls that loom, chill airs that
freeze.

Oh ! dear and hidden Father, grant me this,
When in dark ways Thou lead'st me, to rejoice
Because in light and joy Thou leadest these.

THE MONOTONE

As in a Minster, when a choir unseen
On some rich monotone unceasing dwells
Of creed or prayer, while all about them
swells
Now faint and low, now stately and serene
The brooding organ-music, breathing peace
On what seemed harsh, and making all things
fair
And clean and new, till on the awe-struck
air
The grave melodious thunders roll and cease.

THE MONOTONE

So would I that my heart should softly trace
Some wise intent; thro' sweet and gracious
hours

One steadfast tone, and through bewildering
woes

One steadfast tone, whatever tempest lowers;
And ere I come to die, for some brief space
Silence and recollection and repose!

THE BELL

OLD Bell, grave Bell, how fast thou chim'st away
The last dear hours that of dear days remain ;
Ah, could I speak the thoughts my soul is fain
To speak, the memories that are mine to-day.

I praise thee, Eton, thou art fair and free—
But most I thank thee that thou dost inspire
Him, that is weak and wayward, to desire
To do thy bidding, and be spent for thee.

Mother, I will be faithful ; though the Past
Stands half in tears and half, ah me, in shame.

THE BELL

So little done, although so large the scope ;
I dare not grieve ; I dare not be downcast ;
These flowers shall bloom, the blazon of thy
name,
The lilies of Love and Gratitude and Hope.

A MYSTERY

Shepherds. Sirs, What have you?

Wise Men. A mystery.

Shepherds. O, may we know it?

Wise Men. Yea, hear and see!

Myrrh for a death, and gold for a king;

And incense meet for a Heavenly Thing.

Shepherds. Sirs, how came ye?

Wise Men. By crooked ways.

Shepherds. What is your guerdon?

Wise Men. Love and Praise;

Love for a Mother, Praise for a Birth,

A Star in Heaven and a Star on Earth.

A MYSTERY

Joseph. Sirs, whence came ye?

Wise Men. From old Chaldee.

Joseph. What is your secret?

Wise Men. That we see.

Mother and Maiden undefiled,

Gifts of Grace for a wondrous Child.

Shepherds. Who are yon bright ones?

Wise Men. Yea, we know!

Shepherds. What is their secret?

Wise Men. Ay, 'tis so!

Angel. Peace on the Earth, goodwill for men,
And shining angels to cry Amen.

Angels. Alleluia! Amen.

IN MEMORIAM

CATHARINE GLADSTONE

June 14th, 1900.

Go, faithful Heart ! be his again once more !

How brief the space of parting ! Oh, be free,
Be glad again, where on the further shore
He waits to welcome thee.

∴

Mind conquers mind, and wit, a subtle spark,
Grows dim, and eloquence is soon forgot,
And warriors die, and moulder in the dark,
And men remember not.

IN MEMORIAM

Thou hadst no thought for greatness ; it was fame
Enough for thee if one was reckoned great ;
Enough to keep from fiery shafts of blame
One head inviolate.

God gave thee love whole-hearted, love to thrill
The colder, harder world that girt thee round,
A silent speeding ripple, widening still
To life's extremest bound.

TO OUR MOTHER

January, 1901.

O pure and true, O faithful heart,
Dear mother of our myriad race,
The Father claims thee,—His thou art—
Far hence in some serener place,
To taste, in that diviner air,
The love that thou hast garnered there.

∴

O crown of love, to live and bear
Life's highest sorrows, deepest, best !
The griefs that might have sown despair
Bloomed fruitful in thy patient breast.

TO OUR MOTHER

And now thou goest, robed in light,
From love in faith, to love in sight.

We dare not speak of glory now ;
We will not think of pomp and pride ;
Tho' listening nations veil their brow,
And sorrow at Victoria's side.
The silent Orient wondering hears
The tale of all thy gracious years.

But men of after-time shall say,
“ She was so humble, being great,
That Reason mocked at civil fray,
And Freedom reigned in sober state ;
She ruled, not seemed to rule, her land,
More apt to guide than to command.”

TO OUR MOTHER

And we would mourn thee, not as they

Who weep irreparable loss ;

But grateful for the dear delay,

Beneath the shadow of the cross.

Our tearful eyes to Heaven we lift,

And render back the precious gift.

And men must pass, and tears be dried,

; And younger hearts who have not known

That tender presence, gracious-eyed,

The loving secret of the throne,

Shall wonder at the proud regret

; That crowns thee, and shall crown thee yet.

Peace, come away ! Thou sleep'st beside

The rugged immemorial sea,

TO OUR MOTHER

Where year by year thy navies glide,
And dream of ancient victory ;—
And thou—thou farest forth to prove
The last, best victory of Love.

ODE TO MUSIC

*Performed at the Opening of the new Concert Hall
in the Royal College of Music on June 13th,
1901; the music by Sir Hubert Parry.*

SOUL of the world !
Spirit of slumbrous things, whate'er thou art,
Whodreamest smiling, with bright pinions furled,
Deep, deep, beyond the noise of street and mart,
In forest spaces, or in pastures wide,
Where the hot noonday weaves a breathless
∴ spell,
Along the unfrequented river-side,
Amid the cool smell of the weedy stream,
Of sight and scent thou dreamest well—
But music is thine earliest and thy latest dream !

ODE TO MUSIC

O far-off time !

Ere sound was tamed by gracious mastery,
Faint fugue of wakening birds at matin prime,
Or mid-day booming of the laden bee,
Bass of the plunging stream, or softly stirr'd,
The crawling sea's monotonous undertone,
Or windy lowing of the forest herd,
Thin pipe of dancing flies at shut of day,
Winds in wild places making moan—
These were the songs of earth, in artless disarray.

O march of years !

The simple days are dead, the rich tides roll,
And we, the inheritors of toil and tears,
Utter the ampler message of the soul.
How clear the subtle proem ! Murmuring sweet
The soft wood whispers ; on the silence leap

ODE TO MUSIC

The shivering strings, with motion fairy-fleet,
Soul-shattering trumpets, lending fire and glow;
The mighty organ wakes from sleep,
And rolls his thund'rous diapasons, loud and low.

Behold us met !
In no light fancy, no inglorious mirth,
But strong to labour, striving well to set
The crown of song upon the brows of earth.
Music, be this thy temple hourly blest,
Of sweet and serious law the abiding-place ;
Bid us be patient ! Bid us love the best !
Climb, gently climb, to summits still untrod,
Spirit of sweetness, spirit of grace,
Voice of the soul, soft echo of the mind of God !

ODE TO JAPAN

March, 1902.

CLASP hands across the world,
Across the dim sea-line,
Where with bright flags unfurled
Our navies breast the brine ;
Be this our plighted union blest,
Oh ocean-thronèd empires of the East and West !

For you, for us, the thrill
And freshness of the tide,
Where ice-fed rollers fill
High hearts with steadfast pride ;

ODE TO JAPAN

For both, the genial tropic waves
Press warm across the sea, and chafe our shivering caves.

Here, rich with old delays,
Our ripening freedom grows,
As through the unhasting days
Unfolds the lingering rose ;

Through sun-fed calm, through smiting
shower,
Slow from the pointed bud outbreaks the full-
orbed flower.

But yours—how long the sleep,
How swift the awakening came !
As on your snow fields steep
The suns of summer flame ;

ODE TO JAPAN

At morn the aching channels glare ;
At eve the rippling streams leap on the ridgèd
stair.

'Twas yours to dream, to rest,
Self-centred, mute, apart,
While out beyond the West
Strong beat the world's wild heart ;
Then in one rapturous hour to rise,
A giant fresh from sleep, and clasp the garnered
prize !

Here, from this English lawn,
Ringed round with ancient trees,
My spirit seeks the dawn
Across the Orient seas.

ODE TO JAPAN

While dark the lengthening shadows grow,
I paint the land unknown, which yet in dreams
I know.

Far up among the hills
The scarlet bridges gleam,
Across the crystal rills
That feed the plunging stream;
The forest sings her drowsy tune;
The sharp-winged cuckoo floats across the
crescent moon.

∴

Among the blue-ranged heights
Dark gleam the odorous pines;
Star-strewn with holy lights
Glimmer the myriad shrines;

ODE TO JAPAN

At eve the seaward-creeping breeze
Soft stirs the drowsy bells along the temple frieze.

Your snowy mountain draws
To Heaven its tranquil lines ;
Within, through sulphurous jaws,
The molten torrent shines ;
So calm, so bold, your years shall flow
Pure as yon snows above, a fiery heart below.

From us you shall acquire
Stern labour, sterner truth,
The generous hopes that fire
The Spirit of our youth.
And that strong faith we reckon ours,
Yet have not learned its strength, nor proved its
dearest powers.

ODE TO JAPAN

And we from you will learn
To gild our days with grace,
Calm as the lamps that burn
In some still holy place ;
The lesson of delight to spell,
To live content with little, to serve beauty well.

Your wisdom, sober, mild,
Shall lend our knowledge wings ;
The star, the flower, the child,
The joy of homely things,
The gracious gifts of hand and eye,
And dear familiar peace, and sweetest courtesy.

Perchance, some war-vexed hour,
Our thunder-throated ships

ODE TO JAPAN

Shall thrid the foam, and pour
The death-sleet from their lips.
Together raise the battle-song,
To bruise some impious head, to right some
tyrannous wrong.

But best, if knit with love,
As fairer days increase,
We twain shall learn to prove
The world-wide dream of peace ;
And smiling at our ancient fears,
Float hand in loving hand across the golden years.

CORONATION ODE*

1902.

I.

Crown the King with Life !
Through our thankful state
Let the cries of hate
Die in joy away ;
Cease ye, sounds of strife !
Lord of Life, we pray,
Crown the King with Life !

* Originally published by Messrs. Boosey & Co.;
the music by Sir Edward Elgar.

CORONATION ODE

II.

Crown the King with Might !
Let the King be strong,
Hating guile and wrong ;
He that scorneth pride,
Fearing truth and right,
Feareth nought beside ;—
Crown the King with Might !

III.

Crown the King with Peace !
Peace that suffers long,
Peace that maketh strong,
Peace with kindly wealth,
As the years increase,
Nurse of joy and health ;
Crown the King with Peace !

CORONATION ODE

IV.

Crown the King with Love !
To his land most dear,
He shall bend to hear
Every pleading call ;
Loving God above,
With a heart for all ;—
Crown the King with Love !

V.

Crown the King with Faith !
God, the King of Kings,
Ruleth earthly things ;
God of great and small,
Lord of Life and Death,
God above us all !
Crown the King with Faith !

CORONATION ODE

VI.

God shall save the King ;
God shall make him great,
God shall guard the state ;
All that hearts can pray,
All that lips can sing,
God shall hear to-day ;—
God shall save the King !

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